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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT -
PARIS - Friday, October 14, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Chechnya Hostage Situation
Iraq
Syria

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Secretary Rice's "surprise visit to Moscow" this afternoon is

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briefly noted in Le Figaro and was announced early this morning on the all-news television station LCI.

Front pages and editorials are dominated by SNCM (Corsican ferries) labor unions' vote to return to work. International news focuses on the latest massacre in Chechnya, Iraq, and the avian flu threat at "Europe's door." Liberation reports "confirmed cases in Turkey and several suspicious cases in Romania." The editorial comments on the "need to implement the principle of precaution, made necessary by globalization."

Le Figaro headlines: "A New Massacre in the Caucasus." "True scenes of war and more than sixty dead. The Kremlin orders a lock down of the region." (See Part C)

Iraq and the vote on the Constitution are reported in Le Figaro and La Croix. "Security measures are extremely strict, with the country practically cut off from the rest of the world" writes Agnes Rotivel in La Croix. (See Part C) France Info radio this morning reported that the insurgents have promised "bloodshed". Rotivel also drafts a portrait of the former Marine, Jimmy Massey, author of the book "Kill, Kill, Kill." "We were mercenaries. We had carte blanche to kill..."

The speculation surrounding the "suicide" of Syria's Interior Minister Kanaan leads political analyst Pierre Prier to comment that the Syrian regime is "tearing itself apart from the inside." (See Part C)

Le Monde carries a front-page op-ed by former Socialist Justice Minister Robert Badinter entitled "With Turkey, Europe Renounces." "It is misleading to claim that negotiations will not lead to an automatic membership. This has been the case in the past thirty years. With Turkey's membership, Europe is condemned to becoming an ever-growing market." Le Figaro carries an op-ed by Douglas Alexander, the British Minister for European Affairs, who writes: "With the opening of the negotiations, Europe has done the right thing. Integrating Turkey is in the best interest of both parties."

Financial La Tribune reports on the latest conflict between Paris and Brussels about the WTO, and specifically over Brussels methods: "After the Bokeststein directive and the HP labor dispute, a new bone of contention has risen between Paris and Brussels: President Chirac is asking Barosso for a reorientation of the Doha trade negotiations. Paris is concerned about the concessions the European Trade Commissioner has been making in the name of the EU-25. Yesterday, FM Douste-Blazy called on his British counterpart to apprise him of France's concerns over Brussels leading the negotiations without proper consultations."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Chechnya Hostage Situation

"War Scenes in Caucasus"

Irene de Chikoff in right-of-center Le Figaro (10/14): "From the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea, every Republic is a powder keg. Terrorist attacks are spreading and no one is able to contain their spread or unravel the causes of the conflicts, to determine whether they are caused by growing crime, Islamic Jihadist movements or more ancient ethnic rivalries. At the Kremlin yesterday the atmosphere was heavy, with Putin feeling that the attack in Nalchik was a direct attack on him. Heads will begin to roll. Soon."

"Washington Looking for Winning Strategy"

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (10/14): "The White House continues to make the same bet: by adopting the Constitution. the Iraqis will be proving that they are intent on building a democracy in the Middle East, in spite of terrorism. The escalation of the attacks, and the weak political process are undermining these presidential certainties. American public support for the war is dropping. and soldiers in Iraq have doubts about succeeding. At the same time, diplomats are wondering about the chances for institutional stability. The weak link is the containment of terrorism. Lacking any new strategy to address this, President Bush has put all his hopes in the political process. But on the ground, what is becoming clear is the reverse correlation between the political process and the terrorist escalation. 'When democracy will have been established, it will be the end of the insurrection,' said Vice President Cheney. The fading of this mirage is threatening the White House's exit strategy."

Syria

"The Syrian Regime Tearing Itself Apart from the Inside"

Pierre Prier in right-of-center Le Figaro (10/14): "Does the spectacular and mysterious death of Kanaan signal the beginning of the end for the Syrian regime? . The idyllic landscape orchestrated by Hafez el-Assad has vanished. Syria no longer has allies: not in the West, and not in the Arab world. Damascus is surrounded by hostile nations. The Americans are occupying Iraq. Saudi Arabia suspects Syria from having orchestrated the assassination of Hariri. France and the U.S. became allies to throw the Syrians out of Lebanon. In the post-9/11 era, the former key nation of the Middle East is now the nation no one needs any longer. The U.S., involved in a bloody war in Iraq, sees things in black and white when it comes to its friends and allies. The only thing Washington is asking from Syria is to stop financing Hezbollah. As for France's new stance, it is mainly due to disappointment. Paris wanted to show to the world - but especially to the U.S., the superiority of its soft approach over force and of its intimate knowledge of the Middle East over ideology. France was going to lead Syria to democracy, thus presenting a counter model to Bush's 'Greater Middle East.' Today, the regime, under strong international pressure is tearing itself apart from the inside. But without a major incident, the dissolution of the regime could take a long time." STAPLETON